



City Hall ♦ 333 West Ellsworth Street ♦ Midland, Michigan 48640-5132 ♦ 989.837.3300 ♦ 989.835.2717 Fax

Tornado Safety

By definition, a tornado is a violently rotating column of air in contact with the ground. When the column of air is aloft and does not produce damage, the visible portion is properly called a funnel cloud. Tornadoes can occur anytime of the day or night, but are most prevalent during the hours of 3 to 7 p.m. Tornadoes occur most frequently during the months of April, May, June, and July. They develop from severe thunderstorms and typically approach from the west at speeds from 35 to 70 mph. The average tornado is on the ground for less than 10 minutes and travels a distance of about 5 miles. Rotation winds in the tornado may reach speeds between 100 and 300 mph. Tornadoes do their destructive work through the combined action of their strong rotary winds and the impact of wind-borne debris.

- A **TORNADO WATCH** is issued by the [National Weather Service Severe](#) Storms Forecast Center when weather conditions are favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. When a Tornado Watch is issued for Midland County, you should be alert for signs of threatening weather and make preliminary plans for action. Stay tuned to a local radio or television station for special weather statements and possible warnings.
- A **TORNADO WARNING** is issued by the National Weather Service Office at White Lake when a tornado has been sighted by trained spotters or is strongly indicated by radar. When a tornado is sighted in Midland County, the outdoor warning sirens in the Midland area are activated. Listen closely to warning information. If a tornado is nearby, take protective action immediately. At times, you may be in the warning area, but the reported tornado may not be nearby. Remember, you may still be at risk and should be prepared to take cover since the storm may be moving your way or may produce additional tornadoes or damaging winds.

Tornado Safety Requires Immediate Action

- Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls.
- Protect your head.
- In homes and small buildings - go to the basement or an interior part of the lowest level if an underground shelter is not available.
- Closets, bathrooms, and interior walls offer the best protection in many cases.
- Get under something heavy and sturdy if you can.
- In schools, nursing homes, factories, and shopping centers, go to pre-designated shelter areas. Interior hallways on the lowest floor are usually best.
- In multi-story buildings, go to interior small rooms or hallways on as low a floor as possible.
- In mobile homes or vehicles, leave and take shelter in a substantial structure. If there is no nearby shelter, lie flat in the nearest ditch or ravine with your hands shielding your head.

Tornado Facts

The following storm statistics for Michigan are from years 1950-1994.

- **Number of tornadoes:** 712 (20th in the nation)
- **Number of deaths:** 237 (fifth in the nation)
- **Number of injuries:** 3,214 (eighth in the nation)